

Asperger Syndrome

Asperger Syndrome (AS) is an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, but individuals with AS may differ from other individuals on the autistic spectrum, because they often have above average intelligence and reasonable language skills (no clinically significant delay in spoken or receptive language). Single words may have developed by 2 years of age and simple communicative phrases by three years. However, children with this syndrome have difficulties with social interaction, and reading social cues and body language. They are also likely to have a narrow range of interests and activities. Some individuals also have delayed motor milestones. The *DSM IV-TR* divides Asperger Syndrome into 2 clusters of impairments:

1. Qualitative impairment of social interactions - this presents with difficulties in understanding non-verbal behaviour, establishing peer relationships, and social reciprocity.
2. Restricted areas of interest - this presents with stereotypic behaviours, and narrow range of interests.

Individuals with AS may also display verbosity, have difficulty regulating their voice volume, suffer from attention difficulties and motor clumsiness. Although there is no cure for AS, the fact that these individuals have average, to above average intelligence and reasonable language skills, allows a lot of scope to teach new skills and for the individuals to make good progress in learning about social interaction and social norms. The general long term outlook can be favourable for most individuals with many progressing into the work place following schooling.

Speech and Language

Although individuals with AS can use and understand language, there may be several subtle differences when compared to a neuro-typical individual's language. Their intonation and pitch may be different, often sounding quite flat, and sometimes they will not monitor their volume and talk loudly.

They may have difficulty understanding abstract language such as metaphor, idioms and sarcasm, and are unlikely to use this type of language (see section on "Avoiding Abstract Language" at www.icommunicatetherapy.com). They may have difficulty making inferences from information they read or hear. An individual with Asperger's may also have a very literal understanding of language. Time and maths concepts may also be very difficult for these individuals to comprehend.





Social skills

Individuals with AS may also have difficulties with social skills. Skills such as turn-taking, initiating conversation, asking appropriate questions, and responding appropriately in context can sometimes be a difficulty. An individual with Asperger's may also like to talk at length about their own interests and show little enthusiasm to listen to a conversation about other people's interests. There may also be inappropriate physical contact with touching, pushing past, or not respecting other people's personal space.

A lack of empathy is often a trait that individuals with AS display, they may be insensitive to other people's distress or react inappropriately at the wrong times (e.g. laugh when someone is crying). Language may be used unintentionally that hurts people's feelings, such as telling someone they are fat.

Behaviour

Individuals with AS may also have difficulty with rules, often not being able to generalise the same rule across environments. Their disregard for authority may be due to their lack of understanding people's roles and status. Some individuals may have sensory sensitivities or have things that trigger tantrums or inappropriate behaviour (such as sudden changes to a routine). Those people working with individuals on the autistic spectrum must be aware of behavioural triggers and also have an awareness to prepare individuals when there are changes to their routine.



Some individuals may also have obsessive or ritualistic behaviours, which they may find calming or stimulating.

Learning

Evidence shows that children with AS may be more motivated to learn about a subject if it is incorporated with a special interest. Students may also respond well to visual supports and social stories to help them understand and organise. Awareness of sensory difficulties should also be paramount, with the use of things such as earplugs (to avoid loud noises or distractions), or keyboards (when writing is difficult due to motor difficulties).

See www.icommunicatetherapy.com for more information on Autistic Spectrum Disorders and programs for adults and children with communication difficulties.



To learn more about Asperger Syndrome, Autism and communication click this link to see our [Suggested Reading](#) list and look at, and purchase books.

Suggested reading:

The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome by Tony Attwood

Can I Tell You About Asperger Syndrome?: A Guide for Friends and Family by Jude Welton, Elizabeth Newson, and Jane Telford

Asperger Syndrome And Difficult Moments: Practical Solutions For Tantrums, Rage And Meltdowns by Brenda Smith Myles; Jack Southwick

Parenting a Child With Asperger Syndrome: 200 Tips and Strategies by Brenda Boyd

Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew by Ellen Notbohm and Veronica Zysk

Playing, Laughing and Learning With Children on the Autism Spectrum: A Practical Resource of Play Ideas for Parents and Carers by Julia Moor

Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's by John Elder Robison

Self-Help Skills for People With Autism: A Systematic Teaching Approach by Stephen R. Anderson, Amy L. Jablonski, Vicki Madaus Knapp, and Marcus L Thomeer

Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum: A Parent's Guide to the Cognitive, Social, Physical, and Transition Needs of Teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Chantal Sicile-Kira and Temple Grandin